

AERO-YOGA: A BLESS IN DISGUISE FOR WOMEN

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Abstract:

One of the main concerns of modern Indian health and fitness experts is the concern regarding the physical health of women. Since the half of the nation's population is constituted by women, this concern has to be addressed properly. It is on the health of women that the future of the next generation lies. A woman has many roles to play: taking care of Children, looking after the family, maintaining the domestic life and any other work that wants her attention. In this busy and hectic schedule, she cannot go out for gym, fitness club or even a moderate evening walk. This prone a modern woman to many ailments in India. The present paper tries to solve this problem by proposing a home based simple technique that uses the combination of aerobics and yoga.

KEYWORDS:

Aerobics, Yoga, Cardiovascular Exercise, Flexibility, Fat Loss, Strength, Mental Outlook.

INTRODUCTION

From the ancient times, India is a male dominated nation, where women are always considered to play a secondary role. Women have less opportunities to express and attain her complete self: they are not allowed to mingle freely in the society, they are considered just like baby bearing machines, allowing women to do physical exercises is a taboo as it could make them masculine and destroy their femininity, they are always supposed to be at home. In this oppressive environment, women have no chances of making themselves physically healthy by going to gym, aerobics classes jogging etc., this results in fat accumulation or better known as obesity leads to severe health impediments. This obesity is a modern ailment which is dangerous and can be life threatening, proving to be more obnoxious and route for the cause of blood pressure, diabetes and other cardiac diseases. Hence there is need for an innovative simple method that could help women at home. – the combination of Aerobics and Yoga.

Both yoga and aerobic exercise offer significant health benefits including improved muscle tone, decreased body fat and improved mental outlook, but in different ways. Yoga helps to build strength, increases flexibility and improves balance. However, it does not provide a cardiovascular workout. Aerobic exercise such as swimming, biking and running has little effect on strength and flexibility. However, it burns significant calories and conditions your heart muscle, so that your heart works more efficiently to pump blood throughout your body. So each form of exercise has its strengths and weaknesses and should be selected according to one's fitness goals.

CARDIOVASCULAR EXERCISE

The main difference between yoga and aerobic exercise occurs in the effect each exercise has on

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the heart muscle. Cardiovascular exercises such as running and swimming elicit intense demands on the large muscles of the body, which require more oxygen to perform exercises. The increased need for oxygen causes the heart muscle to work harder, and as your heart adapts to the stress, it becomes more efficient. The slower pace of yoga does not require as much oxygen. Therefore, it does have the same conditioning effect on the heart that aerobic exercises do.

Another key difference between yoga and aerobic exercise lies in caloric expenditure. The average 50 minute Hatha Yoga class burns approximately 144 calories, according to the American Council on Exercise. A 50 minute Ashtanga class, the more vigorous style of yoga, burns slightly more at 237. Compare this to 50 minutes of running or swimming at 355 and 507 calories, respectively. Aerobic exercise burns considerably more calories than yoga.

A study published in the "Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology" in 2004 evaluated energy costs and cardiovascular changes during a sequence of eight yoga poses. The highest recorded heart rate among study participants was 101 beats per minute, which is only 50 percent of maximum heart rate for a 30-year-old. Although yoga involves systematic breathing that improves respiratory fitness, ultimately aerobic exercise outperforms yoga in the cardiovascular arena because it involves elevation of the heart rate for sustained periods of time or for distinct intervals. This improves the efficiency of the heart muscle, allowing it to do more work with less effort during rest times.

STRENGTH

Yoga does tend to boost muscular strength and muscular endurance, according to the American Council on Exercise, particularly in the chest, triceps and abdominal regions. Yoga also helps to develop strength and endurance in many of the core muscles, especially the obliques and the erector spinae. Cardiovascular exercise will help develop muscular endurance, however as a rule, aerobic exercise does not encourage the development of muscular strength to the same extent that yoga does.

In 2011, researchers followed a group of 79 male and female volunteers as they engaged in sun salutations -- a basic yoga sequence -- six days a week for 24 weeks. The "Asian Journal of Sports Medicine" published the study, which found a significant increase in strength and endurance among both men and women whose bench press one rep maximum increased by 15 and 6 pounds, respectively.

FLEXIBILITY

Aerobic exercise has little impact on the development of flexibility, whereas yoga significantly improves it, according to a 2010 USA Department of Health study published in the "Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies." In the study, 108 physically fit firefighters took yoga classes over six weeks. None of the participants had practiced yoga prior to the study. Researchers marked significant improvements in trunk flexibility, and the study participants also reported less musculoskeletal pain overall.

FATLOSS

Fat loss occurs when more calories are expended than consumed. Aerobic exercise -- specifically running at 5 miles per hour -- burns about 600 calories in one hour. A yoga class of moderate intensity -- as practiced in Ashtanga Yoga -- burns about 350 calories. However, calories burned do not tell the whole story. The gain in lean muscle from yoga practice yields a slight improvement in basal metabolic rate. Nevertheless, when exercising five days a week for one hour, running has the potential to burn off three pounds more than yoga over the course of eight weeks.

MENTAL OUTLOOK

Both yoga and aerobic exercise produce immediate and sustained changes in mental outlook, including reduced anxiety and depression, improved self-esteem and a greater overall sense of well being. Some of the changes seen with both forms of exercise can be attributed to improvements in body composition, but a study published in the October 2010 issue of "Perceptual Motor Skills," found immediate improvements to mood following aerobic exercise and for 12 hours thereafter, suggesting that the exercise itself improves mental outlook.

CONCLUSION:

It is true that yoga is an eastern concept while aerobic was developed in the west. In this era of globalization, when the East is being merged with the West, Yoga too has transgressed the barriers of nation. The analogy made in the paper has not only proved that yoga is easier to perform, but also equally beneficial as Aerobics. Yoga leads not only to physical fitness, but also peace of mind which is the ultimate goal of all human beings.

A careful and selective exercise of the Aero-yogic combination can really become a boon for many Indian women.

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